4: Schram M-S (1911-1922) 1957 AE9 Monguor AE9

even minor Living Buddhas live in luxurious residences, 792
with a private chapel and servants. Admittance to the 871
Living Buddha is very complicated; no one is even al- [511]
lowed to enter the kitchen, at the entrance of which, [784]
when the Living Buddha is present, is a high stone, whitewashed and covered with a ceremonial scarf.

The first duty of the intendant is to acquire for his 792
new master two lama teachers of good repute and ex- 871
tensive learning, in order to provide for the education 354
of the pupil. The first lessons consist of training the 292
boy, grooming him for a big throne, to handle the protocol, as one to the manner born. The new pupil, clad in shining garments of embroidered silk, has to learn again and again to proceed with a stately, measured tread to his throne, which is draped with silk of royal yellow; to sit down gracefully, adjusting his clothes decently, and wearing a professional smile. He has to be trained by constant repetition to handle with elegance the stick with tufted end, and with solemnity to touch with it the heads of adoring pilgrims, nodding his head at the same time and smiling with calmness and serenity.

An old master told me that it takes weeks and weeks 792
before a pupil sits well in the saddle, and that after 554
months and months the exercises always have to be 869
repeated, because, he said, the dignity of the pupil and 868
the repute of the master are involved. At the same time, he said, the teacher has to instill in the pupil the idea of the eminence of his state in life, to make him conscious that the people adore him and that he really can procure the salvation of all beings. He has to explain his illustrious pedigree in order to enhance in him the sense of his dignity.[25]

No wonder that travelers meeting Living Buddhas, 157
particularly young Living Buddhas, are impressed by the serious omnipotent look on their faces. It is a common saying that all Orientals are born actors, and the joke is well known, "Dress a beggar with the clothes of a governor of a province, and he will immediately play his role to the peak of perfection." Living Buddhas, however, receive an intensive training.

The little Living Buddha then starts reading and 792
writing, memorizing texts and repeating them before 875
his masters, who inflict corporal punishment when he [876]
fails to measure up to their expectations. The master, after punishing the pupil, kneels before him and apologizes for having been compelled to mete out punishment to so eminent a Living Buddha. It would seem that Living Buddhas, like ordinary lamas, are not very interested in poring over books and racking their brains over philosophical problems. The last T'u-kuan, born in 1894, had two masters, one from Erh-ku-lung and one sent by his friend the Living Buddha of Labrang. The master from Labrang, after some years, gave up all hope of making a learned man of his pupil, and packed

[25] Schuyler Cammann, *The land of the camel*, 79, 80, 94, New York, Ronald Press, 1950. Rynhart, *op. cit.*, 127, 128.

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minister. Such recollected facts always sear the mind 756
of the Monguors, convincing them that the spirit is to be obeyed, and that it is a terrible spirit.

When we take stock of what has been said of the behavior of the Monguors toward the shamans, the inferiority complex of the shamans, the exacting requirements of the spirit, and the poor remuneration of the office, it is no wonder that the shamans do not enjoy their profession and meet their obligations with revulsion. What is more remarkable is that the same trend of mind exists among all the shamans all over Asia.[14]

DEDICATION AND TRAINING OF THE MONGUOR SHAMANS[15]

Usually the son succeeds the father, and the father is the trainer of his son; the father has no other apprentices. However, during the slack season of agricultural routine, it is not unusual to see sons of different shamans staying for a couple of months with a shaman relative, celebrated for the proficiency of his art. The boys recognize the shaman as their master.

The training of the shaman boy starts when he is 756
about ten years of age. At that time the father invites 968 ●
the elders of his family and some shamans, he kills a sheep and performs the ceremony of the dedication. The boy kneels with incense sticks in his joined hands. The shamans beat drums, perform a dance before the picture of the twelve spirits especially honored by them, and before the staff placed before the picture. A shaman, holding the staff in his hands, then invites the spirits to descend into it. When the staff starts shaking, he makes the announcement to the spirits of the dedication of the boy to their service, and asks them whether or not they approve the dedication of the boy. The invited spirits make the staff shiver and shake more and more in the hands of the shaman. The shaman states that the boy is accepted and dedicated for his whole life to the Twelve Tengris; that they will help him, but will get him into serious trouble if he gives only lip service to them; that he is no longer his own master, but is linked to them by the dedication; then he describes the most terrible calamities which are in store for undutiful shamans, while the staff shakes feverishly in his hands. A dance is performed around the boy while drums are beaten and the ceremony is completed. The gamut of all kind of misfortunes and calamities visited on undutiful shamans will be dinned in his ears in all circumstances, so that the boy, living in an atmosphere of fear and apprehensions, will reach his manhood. Stress is to be put on the fact that the shaman is dedicated to the Twelve Tengris who descended into the staff.

[14] Sandschejew, *op. cit.*, 977. Nioradze, *op. cit.*, 55-56. Schmidt, *op. cit.*, 248-706.

[15] See also Vreeland, *op. cit.*, 249, *sq.*, for shamanism among the Daghor Mongols.

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PHYSICAL TRAINING

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A small drum is prepared for the boy and the father teaches him to beat it in the right tempo; he teaches him the usual prayers. Every day in the morning and at evening he will sit cross-legged with his father in front of the picture and the staff, beating the drum, receiving instruction and asking for explanations. The father teaches him the pasting of flags and streamers with white, red, and yellow paper, the cutting of all kinds of paper designs; the kneading of all kind of dough figures used during the rites; the application on red paper of the usual seals. He also teaches him the different kinds of dancing, and how to attack imagined spirits or defend himself against them, with sword and spear; and how to use the whip, the staff, and the knife. Special stress is put on athletic exercises in order to strengthen and supple the muscles and bones, and also on all kinds of acrobatics, climbing up poles, jumping on tables, executing dangerous pirouettes. Because all the shamanist [535] rites are accompanied by dances, peculiar stress is put on moving with grace and elegance with measured steps to the beating of the drum. The best dancers among the shamans are very celebrated all over the country. All shamans are acrobats and fine dancers.

Most shamans are proficient in the art of producing tones and words without any motion of the mouth, so that the listeners are induced to refer the sound to spirits speaking in the drum and answering the questions proposed to them by the shaman. They are wonderful ventriloquists. This art is used at the time the spirits are called up in the drums, and long conversations are held between them and the shamans.

The apprentice, from the very beginning, accompanies his father in performing shamanist rites. He learns with enthusiasm and vigor, for the boy is eager to beat drums, play the acrobat, dance with the elders and imitate them, but at the same time he sees and hears his father conjuring the spirits, calling them up, attacking and chasing evil spirits. He sees the awful rictus of his mouth and jaws, the painful contortions of his whole body; he hears him, worked into a frenzy, predicting the future; and sees his eyes in a fixed stare. Hundreds of times he sees and hears the same rites performed for sick men, and hears the shaman talking to the villagers at the general rites of spring and autumn. Because the [798] same things are said and done over and over again, he remembers them all by heart. The novelty, however, of beating drums, wears off very fast, and unconsciously he starts living in a new world of spirits, acting and thinking in the way of the shamans. He believes his father and the other shamans, he becomes hypnotized by their words, gestures, and acts, and he starts seeing and hearing spirits himself. He gets the conviction that, protected by the twelve spirits to whom he is dedicated, he can also subdue evil spirits and act as the agent of good ones, and he becomes a shaman.

Helping his father and other shamans for years and having himself alone performed rites, eventually when

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his father becomes old and retires, he accepts his incumbency. No more formalities are required, for he is not the shaman attached to the village and does not live at its expense.

INTELLECTUAL AND RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF THE APPRENTICES

The intellectual education of shamans is of a very low standard. Shamans are unable to read Mongol or Tibetan books. Their prayers are said in Chinese, but because the apprentices never attend schools, they are not able to read Chinese books or to write a letter. The elders teach them to write a small number of Chinese characters, used on the few inscriptions pasted on the pole or on the doors and walls of the temples, but most of the time they print the inscriptions by means of engraved wooden blocks. They have, however, a few small prayer books written in Chinese and copied by the most intelligent among them, or by Monguor friends. These prayer books are not printed. Monguors and shamans assured me that they did not possess any books explaining their doctrine. No wonder that the instruction differs, from teacher to teacher. It was always impossible to get a coherent explanation from the shamans about religious subjects. They do not pore over books or rack their brains over theories or philosophical or religious problems. Their science is more one of fantasies, anecdotes, and miraculous tales concerning a number of spirits, told during the performance of the rites. I suppose the instruction of the apprentices would consist of being taught about the same items dealing with the spirits honored by the shamans at the rites of spring and autumn. More will be said about the subject.

The conclusion seems to be that the intellectual and religious training of most of the shamans is neglected and only superficial, and that the physical training ranks first. Many apprentices, in order to perform their physical training and acrobatics, go for months to shamans celebrated in that field. Finally it is said that the education of the apprentices is carried on by accompanying the shamans; their eyes and ears are their real teachers. Some exceptions, however, seem to have existed always, even in these latter times.

Many times I heard the Monguors speaking about a famous old Lu shaman, who died around 1904. The old man went every year to the mountains of Waza with his own apprentice and the apprentices of other shamans. They lived in the caverns, fasting the whole time and sleeping only a few hours during the day. All night they were honoring their spirits, fondling and cajoling them and learning about fighting the evil spirits in the mountains, who every night attacked and combatted them. When they left the mountains, they were exhausted and emaciated from the exertion. The apprentices of the old Lu were said to be the best shamans in the country. Two among them are said to have died by jumping over a precipice in the mountains.

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A lot of anecdotes, overlaid with fabulous legends, are told about powerful shamans who lived in former times. A famous shaman of Too long was invited to cure a dying man. The man died before his arrival. The soul of the shaman, after the completion of certain rites, went to see Erlik Khan, the King of Hell, and examining the files he found that the man had died several years before his destined time. The soul of the shaman came back; he performed a set of new rites and the man came to life and lived for several more years. I wondered how such anecdotes, known all over Asia, were spread among the Monguors. The overall conclusion, after all the talks about old famous shamans, was always: "We no longer have the stuff of which shamans are made, for the apprentices are no longer trained in the right way."

MONGUOR SHAMANS AND NEUROSIS

What about the general statement of the ethnologists that shamans are victims of neurosis? It is said of the brutal training of the apprentices among the nomads, in opposition to the most elementary principles of pedagogy, that nothing could have been devised, better calculated to unseat the reason and to form pitiable neurotics of them.

In former times, according to the Monguors, the training of the Monguor shamans must have been very similar. The recent cases of the two apprentices of the old Lu shaman seem to evidence this assumption. On the other hand, it is a known fact that among the hereditary diseases neurosis is the most frequently inherited. Because children of shamans must marry children of shamans, the danger of inheritance is increased and it creates a predisposition to produce more easily suggestions and hallucinations among the members of such families. The fact of the suicide of the boy No, unwilling to become a shaman, is suggestive. It seems, therefore, not too far fetched to suppose that the shamans and their apprentices easily get the conviction of seeing spirits and hearing them talk. Because they will see and hear them, they act accordingly, notwithstanding their actual superficial training. On the other hand, for neurosis, as for all diseases, the question of plus and minus is always open, but the morbid basis of the disease is always existent.

Some of the shamans performing the rites seem to act as though in a play, straining for effects. They give the profession a black eye, while others seem to mean business and to act as real shamans. After all, the fact remains that shamans never dare to quit the profession, notwithstanding that it is a poor means of livelihood.

SHAMAN DRESS AND IMPLEMENTS

DRESSES

The shaman when not performing rites for communities or private families, dresses in the same way as the Monguors, but while acting as shaman he wears a special

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